



## Commission brings together non-confessional organisations to discuss "Living together and disagreeing well"

Brussels, 02 June 2015

Today, European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans hosted a high-level meeting with eleven representatives from philosophical and non-confessional organisations from across Europe. This sixth annual high-level meeting discussed the topic "Living together and disagreeing well". The meeting took place within the framework of the ongoing dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations based on Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty.

Frans Timmermans said: *"In our diverse European societies, dialogue is essential to creating a community in which everybody can feel at home. Living together means being able to manage differences, even when we fundamentally disagree. Thanks to their contacts with citizens, the non-confessional organisations meeting here today can help us find practical ways to deal with societal challenges, and explore how European policy responses might help."*

Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for the implementation of the dialogue, added: *"Dialogue with religions and non-confessional organizations has a key role in advancing the project of peace that is at the heart of our European Union. It is a vital condition for understanding our differences; we must be able to disagree and still live together."*

The main outcomes of the high-level meetings will feed into the [first Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights in the EU](#) to be held on 1 and 2 October 2015. The central theme of the Colloquium will be "Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe".

Issues discussed in the meeting included: how to foster trust between individuals and communities; how to live together and build a society in which every person and community attached to European fundamental values can feel at home; and how to manage differences in a diverse society.

### Background

High-level meetings and working level discussions are held regularly between the European Commission and philosophical and non-confessional organisations, as well as with churches and religious associations and communities. The dialogue is now under the responsibility of First Vice-President Timmermans. Today's high level meeting with representatives of philosophical and non-confessional organisation is the sixth in the series of meetings launched by the Commission in 2009 when the dialogue with churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations was enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty.

The Commission will hold its annual meeting with religious leaders on 16 June 2015.

The Commission contributes to community building through dialogues such as this one and through financial support for projects creating better inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-convictional understanding. Under the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020, the Commission co-finances with a total budget of EUR 185,5 million projects raising awareness of EU values, notably tolerance, mutual respect, and promoting civil society engagement.

The Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 will support in 2015 projects focusing on preventing and combating anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred and intolerance, as well as projects promoting the development of tools and practices to prevent, monitor and combat online hate speech, including through the development of counter-narratives.

European policy and legislative instruments can support this work at national and local levels. Certain forms of hate crime and hate speech are already forbidden under European law by the [Framework Decision](#) on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, the [Victims Rights' directive](#) to come into force in November 2015 will significantly improve protection of victims of crime, and in 2011 the [Radicalisation Awareness Network](#) was established. [The European Security Agenda](#) and the [Digital Single Market Agenda](#) will contribute to fighting hate crime, and improve prevention work and de-radicalisation measures.

## More information

European Commission' dialogue with churches, religious communities and philosophical and non-confessional organisations on DG Justice home page on fundamental rights:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/dialogue/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/dialogue/index_en.htm)

## List of Meeting Participants

- Yvan BIEFNOT, President of the European Association for Free Thought
- Martine CERF, Secretary General of Egalité Laïcité Europe
- Pierre GALAND, President of the European Humanist Federation
- Nieves Bayo GALLEGO, Grand Master Gran Logia Simbólica Española
- Catherine JEANNIN-NALTET, Grand Mistress of the Women's Grand Lodge of France
- Daniel KELLER , Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France
- Dimitrios LYBERIS, President of the Council of the International Masonic Order « Delphi »
- Keith PORTEOUS WOOD, Executive Director of the National Secular Society
- Ms Yvette RAMON, Grand Master of International Order of Co-freemasonry, "Le Droit Humain"
- Tomasz SZMAGIER, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Poland
- Steven WARMOES, ex-Grand Master Grand Lodge of Belgium

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